

VZCZCXRO0362
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHEK #1565/01 3101118
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 061118Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8481
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1792
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 1331
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0367
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2204
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1589
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 001565

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2016

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SUBJECT: MEDIA COVERAGE OF KYRGYZ PROTESTS PREDICTABLE,
WITH ONE SURPRISE

REF: BISHKEK 1554

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Classified By: Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: The majority of media outlets in Kyrgyzstan are either government-owned or pro-government in content. News coverage of the protests have largely painted the protesters in a negative light. However, one new, small independent TV station has sided with the opposition and is providing unbiased coverage of events in its news coverage. End Summary.

Media Coverage Predictable

12. (C) Media coverage of the protests has been largely predictable. Most Kyrgyz get their news from television, since with one exception (the daily, pro-government Vecherniye Bishkek) all other newspapers are published on a weekly schedule. State owned KTR, the channel with the largest viewership, and the only station that reaches the whole country, has done its best to play down the protests. While a discussion between pro-government and pro-opposition supporters was taped late last week and has been shown on occasion over the weekend, coverage during news shows has been limited and biased. Even though protestors have marched to the KTR Studio building at least three times, the only time the channel has provided "breaking news" type coverage was during a protest at the studio when the channel's Deputy Director Beyshenbek Bekeshov was purportedly in a scuffle after addressing the protestors.

13. (C) KOORT, a television channel rumored to be owned by the President's son Maxim Bakiyev, has been similarly slanted in its coverage of the protests. The station has provided a large amount of time to government officials, in particular

the Prosecutor General. Rather than dismiss the protests, the channel,s news coverage has focused on the negative externalities of the protests) trash in the main square and traffic disruptions. It has largely avoided the larger political issues being debated.

14. (C) Many of the main internet news sites in Kyrgyzstan remain blocked to the outside world. Independent wire service AKIPress and generally anti-US wire service 24.kg have been inaccessible since November 2. AKIPress has temporarily opened a blog to publish their information outside of Kyrgyzstan. Elcat, the primary internet provider in Kyrgyzstan, and the wire services report that the denial of service attacks have continued since November 2, with attackers actively working to overcome any new defenses the companies may put in place.

NTS Throws In With the Opposition

15. (C) The only surprise in the media coverage has been the new NTS channel. The station started airing the day after the March 24, 2005 events, and is owned by an Opposition MP with large investments from Russian companies and is run by a president with no media experience (Baktygul Jeenbaeva is a former banker and government economist), the channel has been a plucky independent voice. The channel has been using a system of couriering tapes of the protest back to the main studio and airing them without comment on what amounts to a thirty minute to one hour delay (Comment: KTR is the only channel in Kyrgyzstan with live to air capability, but their Soviet-era equipment is unwieldy, and unsurprisingly, has so far been unused during the protests). NTS,s taped coverage focuses almost exclusively on opposition speakers, with

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pro-government voices receiving very little airtime on the "without comment" segments.

16. (C) During regular newscasts, the day,s events are provided in a very evenhanded manner with regular live telephone interviews with reporters on the scene of the protests. The channel has also been running public service-style announcements on behalf of the opposition, urging people to come to the main square to protest and linking President Bakiyev with corruption.

17. (C) NTS,s potential audience is limited to Bishkek and its environs, and its reporting and investigative staff are small. The channel is making a name for itself during these protests, however. PAS staff visiting the White House on November 6 noticed that many of the televisions in the offices were tuned to NTS for its "almost live" coverage of events throughout the day.

YOVANOVITCH